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THE VANGUARD OF AN INTERNATIONAL ARMY¹

BY ANNIE W. GOODRICH, R.N.

General Ireland, Members of the Medical Staff, Friends and my Colleagues: I value more deeply than I can express the privilege and honor of addressing you today. The inspiration of this truly great occasion is immeasurably deepened for me by the memory of the beautiful exercises at the Walter Reed Hospital for the eastern and larger wing of this army of student nurses whose course has now come to a successful completion.

I would that I could bring vividly before those present the episodes of that week in Washington—episodes for which the grounds of Walter Reed recently so beautified, its historic buildings, and the dignity of the military procedures and accoutrements provided so rich and rare a setting. Class day, commencement, and prophetic pageant made a colorful chapter in the history of nursing, the last scene of which could not be more fittingly enacted than here at the Presidio looking out through the Golden Gate. But these moments are too precious, the opportunity of a parting message too great to permit more than this brief mention of the beautiful and to us, perhaps indeed to our country, who knows, important event of the graduation of the first class of the Army School of Nursing.

Let us for a moment lift the curtain of the past to gaze upon those days in which this school found its inception. As we do so, the memories press thick and hard. We realize when we try to review its coming into existence that years—no, centuries, ago it was ordained by St. Vincent de Paul whose pronouncement was a vision of the nurse of today:

They shall have no monasteries but the house of the sick, no cells but a hired room, no cloisters but the streets of the town and the wards of the hospital, no inclosure but obedience, and for convent bars, only the fear of God; for a veil they shall have a holy and perfect modesty; and while they keep themselves from the infection of vice they shall sow the seeds of virtue wherever they turn their steps.

Its corner stone as a professional school was laid in the Crimea; its curriculum assembled and tested through application, by the scholarly and devoted pioneers of our profession, amongst whose names must ever, outstandingly arise—Isabel Hampton Robb, teacher, nurse, mother, who never rested until the doors of the university were opened to us; her erudite comrade, M. Adelaide Nutting, who through the

¹ Address delivered at the graduation of the first class, Army School of Nursing, Letterman General Hospital, San Francisco.

university has steadily broadened and enriched our curriculum and to whom we owe the highly prepared women who in this country and others even to far away China are steadily raising the standards of nursing, and thereby the wellbeing of the peoples; Sophia Palmer, the first and for many years the only editor of THE AMERICAN JOURNAL OF NURSING, to whom we are immeasurably indebted for that most powerful organ for rapid dissemination of information, a professionally directed press; Lillian Wald, to whom the children of the streets of many cities and in the far removed places owe a debt of which they will never be aware; and lastly, Jane Delano, through whose organizing ability as well as command of the affection of the members of her profession, brought, when the unprecedented call for nurses came in 1917, an enrollment of 8,000 reserves through the Red Cross. We wish it were possible to dwell upon the service rendered by the state inspectors of the schools of nursing beginning with Elizabeth Burgess; and the nursing heads and their assistants of the civil and army hospitals to whom Miss Stimson has already paid tribute, a long list led by Mary M. Riddle and Marie Louis. We realize we can never adequately express our gratitude to that staunch supporter of the ideals of the nursing profession, Dr. Winford H. Smith of Johns Hopkins, then in the Surgeon General's Office, and above all and in any measure, of our debt to General Robert E. Noble in whose hands the establishment of the school so definitely lay. These are indeed but a few of the many that made possible the creation of the school, for it must not be forgotten that the interest of the young womanhood of the country was aroused and the students called to both civil and army schools through the machinery of the American Nurses' Association, working in close coöperation with the women of the country giving their service through the Red Cross and the National Council of Defense. It would almost seem that the school owes its life and the way it was shaped to every group that before and during the war, was mobilized for constructive service to mankind. How little was this realized in those days when we became part of the great staff gathered together for the purpose of evaluating and distributing the manhood and womanhood of the country for rapid and immediate action; millions of our best manhood to be projected into a situation that spelt destruction, therefore demanding constant replenishment of their kind and the conservation of their strength and energy through the material elements as well as the provision for the care of their bodies through the science of medicine and nursing.

Our imagination again brings forcibly before us the extraordinary mobilization of these forces, their rapid projection into another continent, the heroic deeds of men, and not less of women "over

there," and on this side a hardly less extraordinary achievement through the rapid creation of hundreds of munition factories, of shipping facilities not heretofore available in this country, of great thousand-bed hospitals with their scientific equipment and this in the face of a tragedy—the epidemic of 1918—hardly less heartrending and devastating than the tragedy being enacted on the other side. No one can ever know what the unprecedented and immediate response of the students to the call of the school meant to those in whose hands the responsibility lay. In less than five months more than 10,000 applications were received, over 5,800 of which met the admission requirements; but how our heart aches again at the thought of those ardent young spirits who came so eagerly and were so immediately torn from us by that terrible pestilence.

It is impossible in any space of time which could be allotted to this address to attempt to present the briefest picture of the many vivid and dramatic episodes, already dimming, of those days. But there is a memory that should always be with us, the way in which a great country came together, men, women, and children, rich and poor, for a great project—the destruction of a threatening evil, the safeguarding of the things we held most dear. This is a memory to be cherished for itself and for those concerned, but above all, must we retain it because it points to a fact of most profound importance to the builders of the future; namely, that given existing evils and knowledge concerning methods of destroying them an intelligent society should not permit them to continue, for it has again been demonstrated that it is possible to unify minds scattered over a vast territory into a great effective force.

When the history of those epochal years, 1914 to 1920, is written, does anyone question that towering above all episodes of that extraordinary period will be that of 1917, the Russian Revolution? Recently I listened to an exposition of the situation in Russia by a Russian authority. In sharp, bold strokes he threw, as it were, upon a canvas the picture of the awakening to a knowledge by the masses of their power if expressed through group action. Ignorance unloosed, undirected by reasoned knowledge, great nobilities and appalling beastialities—a veritable Frankenstein whose only weapon was revolution instead of a great constructive force whose tool is evolution. It is my belief, if I may venture to have a belief in the matter, that never was there a more effective illustration of the truth once voiced by John Stuart Mill, writing to a well known teacher of his day, "I agree with you, sir, that real education is the contact of human living soul with human living soul"—that that cataclysmic moment when the great masses of a country, the population of which

is 125,000,000, the illiteracy of which is unquestionably great, through some dissemination of knowledge so universal, that for the moment at least these masses spoke as one voice, and speaking overthrew the established laws, systems, and customs of generations and of the most autocratic of governments. It is this conviction, this fact indeed, that makes the message my feeble pen can bring to you of but small moment, but the question—What will you do with your unusually rich and varied preparation? of the most profound importance. Do I need to rehearse to you the good things you have fallen heir to? In the first place, I count of no small importance the sound foundations you yourselves laid through your previous educational preparation—all of you had at least four years of secondary work, many of you advanced academic and scientific courses, many had been in the teaching field,—a splendid soil in which to sow the knowledge made possible through the gathering together in our camp hospitals of the greatest scientists in the field of medicine and surgery, of the best thought and experience in nursing, and the most elaborate equipment that hospitals have ever seen; added to this we have the opening of the doors of the leading civil hospitals in the country in order that you should have those experiences not to be found in the military institutions; and lastly, we have the Red Cross making it possible for you to add to your curriculum a wider experience in health matters through the visiting nurse organizations of various cities.

Since I failed to put my message to your eastern sisters into the written word, in so speaking to you today I am speaking to them again. To me, you of the east and of the west, individually so lovely to look upon, your varying abilities so fascinating to contemplate, are nevertheless integrated into a great moving constructive force with no small part to play in the march of progress. You and your civil hospital sisters are to me a most important branch of the great army of womanhood upon whose conception or interpretation in the next few years of the aim of life, I venture to assert, depends in no small measure the life or death of our tottering civilization. For this reason I desire to bring before you, briefly but vividly, your part in the dissemination of the scientific knowledge now available in our great laboratories, your extraordinary opportunity to interpret to the people in simple language and by practical examples the life-giving message of the age epitomized by our great statesman, Lowell: "Democracy in its best sense is merely the letting in of light and air."

We need hardly rehearse the world as it is today: from one angle, almost too terrible to contemplate, a world wide unrest, a continent reeking with misery, a little cloud no larger than a man's hand arising in the far east, while in our own country physical conditions

and educational limitations revealed to us through the draft, disquieting indeed to thoughtful minds. Nevertheless, the world looked at today from another angle fills us with abundant hope. We have scientific knowledge that was never before available. We have thousands where formerly there were tens who hold that knowledge in their hands. We live in an age that has been called the social age, an age that has a sense and a growing sense of common responsibility. We have a new message not only in medicine, although perhaps by this science it is more dramatically exemplified than by any other—a message not only of the cure of certain existing evils, but their prevention, their complete elimination from the scheme of things. To such a group as this, I need hardly rehearse the outstanding examples of this fact; in the not far past a surgeon to save a life had to amputate a limb, today through aseptic surgery it is possible to save both life and limb; tuberculosis, a scourge for centuries before Christ—would I assert too much if I said that with the knowledge that we now have, given adequate machinery, could be entirely stamped out; insanity, so little understood that its victims were formerly, and indeed in some parts of the world still are, treated as criminals, whereas today crime itself is being revealed in many instances to be due to mental abnormalities curable or preventable if recognized in early life.

The arch enemies of man, it matters not how they express themselves, whether through pestilence, famine, or the sword, are ignorance, poverty, disease, and crime, and the greatest of these is ignorance. These evils are indifferent to their victims, child, adult, aged, alike become their prey. It is they and not their victims that should be overcome. The greatest evil to my mind is that which deprives a little child of the garden of youth and, most pitiful and despicable of all, that filches from it its power to laugh. There are literally thousands of children today who have never laughed and who will have no memories of the joy of youth and, greatest tragedy of all, they are found not alone in the devastated countries overseas. The most beautiful, the least provincial, and therefore, most cosmopolitan, almost statesmanlike attitude that I can think of is that of the child mind the early and only inscription on which has been made by the hand of love. "I can do nothing with the child, madam," exclaimed the irate nursemaid of a beautiful but to her mind too democratically inclined little girl. "She will speak to every one on the street who looks at her. You should have seen the horrid old beggar she was just making friends with." "But mamma," protested the indignant and perplexed child, "that old man shined on me and *I shined back on him.*" What will be the effect of a starved joyless youth on the attitude of the man toward the world?

Another great evil is that which deprives the aged of the only solace of old age, the home. There are thousands today that have no homes. And there is a third evil and in a certain sense again the greatest—the evil that deprives the country—no, the world, of the creative and constructive power of its normal manhood and womanhood. There is an inestimable loss of such power through early and preventable death or mental and physical crippling.

Even as I asked your eastern sisters, so shall I beg you to read three books: the first two, "It Might Have Happened to You," by Coningsby Dawson, and "The Next War," by Will Irwin, I ask you to read that you may see clearly the pitiful today and the tomorrow that might, but must not be. The third, "Reconstruction in Philosophy," by our great educator, John Dewey, to me at least, gives promise of the gradual coming of that "great far off divine event toward which the whole creation moves." Contemplative knowledge, Dr. Dewey informs us, has been superseded through the demonstrations of science that knowledge is power to transform the world by practical knowledge.

A fact even more succinctly stated, perhaps, by Bernard Shaw in his last and not the least extraordinary production, "Back to Methuselah": "I tell you," says the serpent to Eve, "I am very subtle. When you and Adam speak I hear you say WHY, always WHY—you see things and you say WHY? but I dream things and I say WHY NOT?" Dr. Dewey points out that this new attitude toward knowledge arouses an interest and an energy in attacking difficult and unpleasant conditions, whereas the former attitude made one turn from the unpleasant. He points to the play of childhood as ceaseless activity, not rest and recreation following enforced toil, and through this fact he leads us on until he defines art as the union of joyful thought with the control of nature.

Revivifying indeed is this conception of life, but as we glance over the developments in the field of science, thrilled as we must be by the proof of his contention, must not our discontent be the greater concerning the things to which this science has been applied? Can any thinking person contemplate unmoved the stupendous achievements in the past few years—the penetration of the ocean, the climbing of the skies, the elimination of time and space through the wireless; in the field of experimental agriculture the change of texture, contour, color, and type of flower and fruit; without the insistent question—What changes have been wrought in and for Man in any way commensurate to these—for Man the one creation through whom these things are brought about? We know today with an almost mathematical certainty the conditions found in any given unit of

population that ought not to be. We are kept informed of the unpleasant facts which we repeat with the dreary monotony almost of a machine. To our desk come weekly the reports of the infant mortality rate for the United States. We note with interest and some satisfaction that while San Francisco's is only 62 per thousand, New York, that great metropolis, has lowered its rate to 85 per thousand despite its sunless, airless tenements glutted with humanity, in marked contrast to some small industrial towns that report over 200, but we cannot close our eyes to the result of various intensive experiments,—for instance, the reduction to 11 per thousand by a model English village.

There is an old saying that has not yet been disproved, "Where two or three are gathered together." We are told that war is the result of secret diplomacy which is indeed the gathering of two or three together, and behold a purification by fire and sword with its terrible concomitants—a terrorized and destroyed childhood, a crippled manhood and womanhood, a distraught old age. In the face of a world population you are but a few drops in a great ocean of humanity, yet it is my dream, my prayer, and my belief that this group, the largest ever graduated from any one school and the most comprehensively prepared, will join hands with their professional sisters from other schools and in other lands and this time *preceding*, not *following*, the armies of the world, will inscribe upon the unwritten surface of many minds the gospel of prevention of human ills. "It is man that is sacred and not autocracies or democracies," said Lowell. To me the nurse is the high priestess of a religion that proclaims the sacredness of humanity. It is her function to conserve for the little child in all its perfection its beauty of mind and body and the joy of its youth, to strengthen for the world the power of its manhood and womanhood, and to lead tenderly the steps of the old. Hers is an unequalled opportunity, for the doors of all homes are open to her; she speaks through her actions, and the result of her actions, a language so universally understood that it needs no interpreter, a veritable Esperanto. I said there was a little cloud in the far east—shall it be dissipated through an army such as this—an army concerned with the question of nationality, race, color, and sex, only in so far as such information enables a more effective service of heart, mind, and hand; or shall it be in the old accepted way?

I am confident that as true daughters of the Army you will never be satisfied to express yourselves in other than effective action, motivated by a high sense of duty. The varied experience that has brought you into such intimate contact with suffering and needs will insure your seeking a field through which you are convinced you are making

a definite contribution to the reshaping of human lives. Your association with the great thinkers of the world, your knowledge of the ever increasing contributions of science and art to social betterment will bring the trained power of imagination to your task and will keep before you the necessity of food, not less for your mind than for your body. It will make you turn continually for further light and inspiration to those great treasure houses of human thought and accomplishment,—the universities, upon the library shelves of which, I repeat, will be found today sufficient knowledge to transform the world. The ways and means of bringing this about will be written in all tongues, for the Immortals speak not to nations, but to mankind, their message is not for today alone, but for the remote future. To have read "*Les Miserables*" in one's youth was to be grateful to be living in another country and in another time; to read it again today, is to know that it is for you tomorrow. Wrote Victor Hugo to the Italian publisher of this great human document:

You are right, sir, when you tell me that *Les Miserables* is written for all nations. I do not know whether it will be read by all, but I wrote it for all. It is addressed to England as well as to Spain, to Italy as well as to France, to Germany as well as to Ireland, to Republics which have slaves as well as to Empires which have serfs. Social problems overstep frontiers. * * * In every place where man is ignorant and despairing, in every place where woman is sold for bread, wherever the child suffers for lack of the book which should instruct him and of the hearth which should warm him, the book of *Les Miserables* knocks at the door and says: "Open to me, I come to you." At the hour of civilization through which we are now passing, and which is still so sombre, the miserable's name is Man; he is agonizing in all climes, and he is groaning in all languages. * * * Where is your army of school masters, the only army which civilization acknowledges? Where are your free and compulsory schools? Does everyone know how to read in the land of Dante and of Michael Angelo? Have you made public schools of your barracks? Have you not, like ourselves, an opulent war-budget and a paltry budget of education? Let us subject your social order to examination, let us take it where it stands and as it stands, let us view its flagrant offences, show me the woman and the child. It is by the amount of protection with which these two feeble creatures are surrounded that the degree of civilization is to be measured. There are Italians, and they are numerous, who say: "This book, *Les Miserables*, is a French book. It does not concern us. Let the French read it as a history, we read it as a romance." Alas! I repeat, whether we be Italians or Frenchmen, misery concerns us all. Ever since history has been written, ever since philosophy has meditated, misery has been the garment of the human race; the moment has at length arrived for tearing off that rag and for replacing, upon the naked limbs of the Man-people, the sinister fragment of the past with the grand purple robe of the dawn.

Courage, dear colleagues, something has indeed happened in several countries at least since Victor Hugo penned this letter in 1862, barely sixty years ago, for feeble woman has been permitted to take her place by the side of man and is increasingly sharing in the

responsibility and shaping of the state. Increasingly she is to be found today in the universities, in the occupational field, in the courts of law, and in the political arena. Let us pray that in so sharing the world-responsibilities of man, she will bring to bear upon these great problems the kind of mind that takes from the past only that which will strengthen the present and thereby create a world safe and beautiful to which to welcome the generations that are to come. This kind of mind which is the greatest gift of the All-wise is well called the creative mind. It is the young mind, the mind that radiates the golden glory of the west, the mind that I am confident you will bring to your great task, and if you do, I predict that a world change not less great can and will be brought about. That it is this mind that you will bring to the great work that lies before you is evidenced, I dare to hope, by the vision that led you to answer the call of your country through this service and that caused you to pursue this course to a successful end. Hold high through life the little lamp you have so nobly earned. It will burn brightly through the knowledge which has been poured so abundantly into it by those who have directed your instruction and experience. "As one lamp lights another nor grows less," so shall you light a million lamps upon a thousand hills whose penetrating rays shall guide and guard the stumbling, halting steps of our civilization on its long pilgrimage toward the ideal.

DOES A PRIVATE DUTY NURSE DO PUBLIC HEALTH NURSING?

BY RUTH BIRCHARD, R.N.

Cleveland, Ohio

FIRST PAPER

[In this and several succeeding papers, which will appear at intervals, a record is given of a few cases of a private duty nurse who did definite public health work on forty per cent of her cases. These covered a period of ten years, before the days of twelve-hour duty.]

In almost every case there was some conversation on right living as a means toward health and happiness. In thirty-five per cent of the cases, some very definite public health work was done, such as teaching on hygiene of the home; dietetics; instruction which led to the cleaning of unsanitary cellars and outhouses. Two outdoor privies were disinfected, reported to the Board of Health and to owners of rented property so that they were removed. Scabies and pediculosis were discovered in a home of neurasthenics of years' standing and